Acorn

ISSUE 17 AUTUMN 1990

NEWS LETTER

Titbits from the MD's table

Acorn recently welcomed five visitors from our Australian and New Zealand offices. During a working lunch in Sam's office, the following snatches of conversation were overheard:

'This is my first time out of Australia, and I can't get over all the old buildings in Cambridge. I was staggered to discover the price of a 240-year-old house I saw. I can't imagine how much a new one would cost!' – Shane Wharton, Sydney.

'Doug and I know England better than the others. I'm a pom anyway and Doug has been coming to England since 1983. This trip gives us a chance to discuss business plans and meet more Acorn people.' – Bob Moir, Managing Director, Australia.

'I'm here with my wife Catherine and two children, Christopher (9) and Louisa (7). Coming to the UK gives us the chance to visit Scotland together. We haven't been back in 18 years.' – Rainer Schroeder, Finance Manager.

'The biggest difference between the UK and Australian and New Zealand markets is large geographical areas and small populations. Getting the product in front of the potential purchaser is the hardest problem we face.' – Doug Pauling, Managing Director, New Zealand.

'I nearly spent my first night here sleeping on Parker's Piece. When we arrived everyone had a room booked in the University Arms except me. Fortunately the Gonville had a room.' – Peter Revell, Sales and Marketing Manager, Melbourne.

'Apart from that small hiccup, we've had a very warm reception. We've had a tight work schedule, but we've been entertained very well too.' – Bob Moir.

'Yesterday we had lunch in "The Spade and Becket". The streets behind it looked just like "Coronation Street".' – Bob Moir.

'Peter's wife is an Australian TV personality. She starred with Alan Dale (Jim Robinson in "Neighbours") in another Australian soap.' – Doug Pauling.

'Yes, and now she's expecting our fourth child. Although I'm working in Australia, she's staying in New Zealand with the kids until the baby arrives.' – Peter Revell. ■

From left to right: (sitting) Bob Moir, Shane Wharton, Rainer Schroeder, Ken Parnis; (standing) Mike O'Riordan, Peter Revell, Doug Pauling

Olivetti office appoints new Chief Executive

Mr Ettore Morezzi has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Olivetti Office. He replaces Dr Tato whose resignation was announced at the beginning of October.

Sam Wauchope has recently had an opportunity to meet Mr Morezzi in Ivrea.

'Mr Morezzi has endorsed all of the very positive activities which we now have underway with Olivetti Office. He has made it clear to his managers that he wishes to continue the move towards Acorn being a significant element of the group, both in terms of sales and of development of products which Olivetti might sell.

'He is visiting us in mid-November, when we will have a further chance to impress him. In addition, he has already indicated his willingness to join our board of Directors.

'So all in all, I am very pleased that the change is turning out so positively for us.' ■

Sam presents cheque to Oxfam

The success of the Oxfam Walk, which takes place in Cambridge in early May each year, is due to the efforts of a large number of people. Apart from the walkers, a great many people give up their time to man the checkpoints, provide refreshments and help any walkers that get into difficulties. Their contribution is always greatly appreciated both by the organisers and the walkers.

However, since the whole point of the event is to raise money for charity, the people who really make the day work are those who so very generously sponsor the walkers. This year the Acorn team was sponsored to the tune of some £830 and a cheque for this amount was presented to Oxfam earlier in the year.

In October, Sam presented a further cheque for £250 from the company to Gill Human from Oxfam. This brings the grand total collected by Acorn to £1080. Well done, everybody!

For the record, Acorn walkers were Tim Beeby (with brother Kevin), Jon Thackray, Peter Harrod, Hazel Doig, Terry Germany, Colin Bartlett, John Wilkins, Richard King (with wife Anne), Ian Stacey (with girlfriend) and Lisa Waterfield. Teresa Downey also finished the walk with baby James in his pushchair proving that the Oxfam Walk can be fun for all the family!

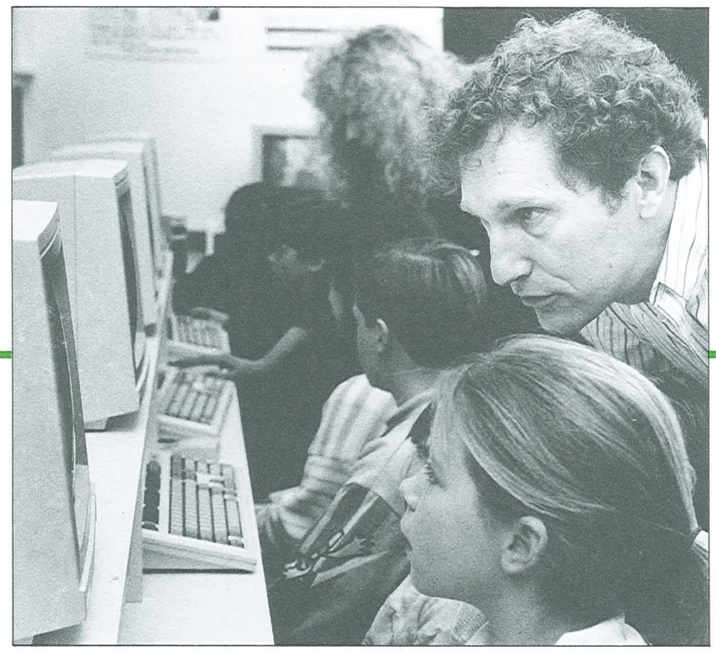
Next year let's get together an even bigger team, and let's bring along more of our families and friends. That way we can spread the burden of sponsorship across an even wider public and raise even more money for a really worthwhile cause! ■

Melbourne primary school beats ministry cutbacks

Princes Hill Primary School in Melbourne has found a way around the shortage of Victoria State educational funds. Through enthusiastic fund raising, including fêtes, stalls and raffles, the school has raised more than $20,000 towards the $27,000 needed to equip its new computer room with twelve networked Archimedes machines.

Commenting on the new laboratory, the school's principal, Ms Anne Beck, said: 'We will have facilities for both staff and pupils to gain ready access to software in a way that is easy even for those not familiar with computers. We can still run our BBC software but these faster systems enable us to run intensive computing functions such as desktop publishing.'

Princes Hill's computer room was set up by TecMaster. Managing Director, David Smith, added: 'Educational software in primary schools can stimulate and challenge pupils in many areas of the curriculum, while allowing each child to progress at his or her own pace.'



Princes Hill computer room opening – The Junior School Council at Princes Hill Primary School were the first lucky users of the school's new Acorn computer room after its opening last week. David Smith of Tecmaster helps grade 5/6W council representative Sophie Boyd-Hurrell, 10, get started on a history program

Nine present themselves for training

Interest in company training courses continues to be high with two more Managing Personal Growth workshops in September and October and a Presentation Skills course in August.

Trainees on the Presentation Skills course ranged from those with little experience of presentations to 'old hands' who wanted to improve their techniques. Everyone who attended was very complimentary about the course which was run by Sue Blow of MaST.

At the start of the two-day course, individuals were each asked to give a five-minute presentation. These were recorded on video so that their performances could be discussed. By the end of the course, trainees were more confident and had improved their technique.

Don't be surprised therefore, to be at the receiving end of much improved rhetoric and oratory from Trevor Steel (Planning), Paul Garside (Technical Publications Manager), David Howarth (Information Systems), Kechil Kirkham (Project Management), Steve Cormie (Software), Andrew Payton (Information Systems), Martin Clemoes (Project Management), Henry Howarth (Product Manager) and Lee Smith (Software Manager).

Sydney office 'signed up'

Recent changes at the Sydney office include the appointment of Kate Moody as an Education Consultant and the fixing of Acorn signs outside the offices in Parramatta. Kate joins Acorn Australia from a large software distributor which also acted as a BBC dealer.

The back of the new offices in Sydney enjoy a rural view over the Parramatta River and beyond that is a significant user of Acorn products, the Macarthur Girls High School.

Other news from Sydney is the overseas trip of Alvey Fernadez who flew over to Uruguay for his vacation. The excellent photographs provided by Alvey do include his attractive girlfriend; however, the printers inform us that they are 'inseparable'.

Kate Moody – Acorn, Sydney, Australia

Keeping people abreast of quality issues

At a recent meeting of the Steering Committee it was mentioned that communication with the rest of the company could be improved. It was decided that there should be a regular item in this newsletter on specific tasks related to Quality Edge as well as relevant pieces of information put on the company noticeboards.

Total quality within Acorn means continuous improvement of customer satisfaction and the following set of principles has been drawn up:

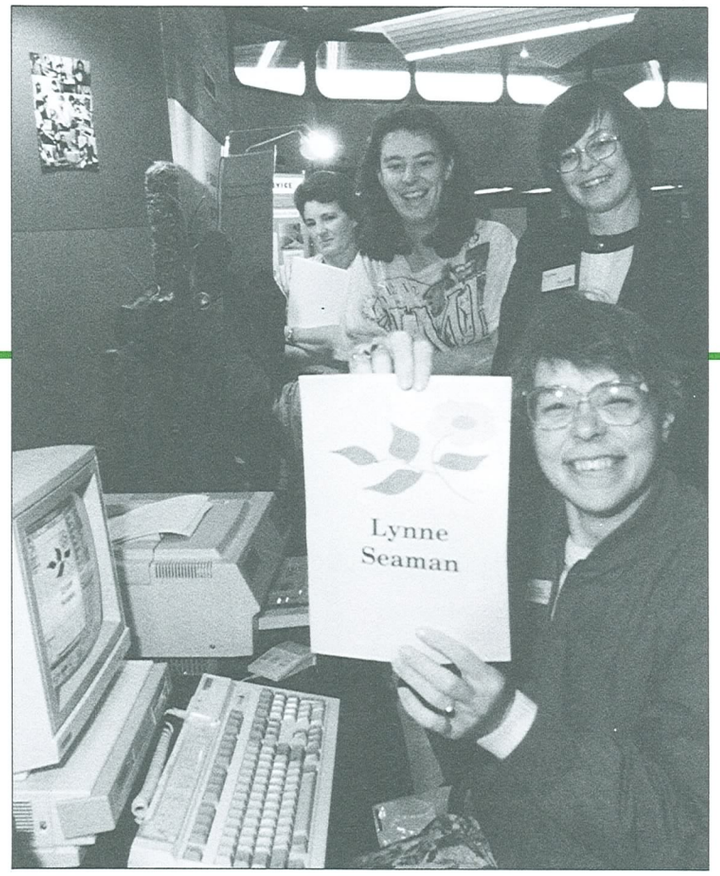
1. Commitment by example from the top;
2. Understanding the cost of quality;
3. Continuous elimination of waste;
4. Belief that everyone has a responsibility for quality.

In 1991 we will begin the formal process of applying for BS 5750 certification. However, in 1990 we decided to start to fulfil the interests of a total quality company by producing a set of operating procedures detailing how Acorn currently operates.

A list of procedures and policies was produced in June this year and the next step is for each department to produce a set of draft procedures for its own area. To help with this phase in the process, Alison Formstone has joined Acorn for approximately three months. Alison not only has a good understanding of procedural requirements but also has experience of BS 5750.

Work on improving the balance between sales and production continues and a new task-force has been set up under the chairmanship of Jeff Gorton. The first meeting of this committee took place at the end of September.

Supporting people with special needs



Renowned for its flexibility and expandability, the BBC Model B Microcomputer became extremely popular with people with special needs. The Master 128 has proved a very capable successor in this important market, and Krys Boughey, Sector Manager, Special Needs, is keen for the company to continue its success as Acorn migrates to its ARM-based products.

'It makes little difference to most of us whether the on/off switch is located at the front or the back of the machine,' says Krys, 'but if you are physically disabled, it could be the one thing that prevents you from using the computer without assistance from someone else.

'Many people are still unclear about the meaning of "special needs"', claims Krys. 'It's not a simple division between able-bodied and physically disabled people, but a category which includes anyone with a physical disability or learning difficulty, or both.

Special needs often conjures up images of severely or multiply handicapped people, when it actually includes physical disabilities, sensory impairment and learning difficulties ranging from someone who is virtually completely paralysed or recovering from a head injury, to an elderly person with arthritis or a slight tremor who has difficulty using a traditional keyboard or mouse.

'There are all kinds of input devices other than keyboards, including concept keyboards, touch screens and joysticks. If all a person can do is suck and blow, or blink an eye, or vocalise, they can still operate a computer. Thousands of software titles specifically for special needs are already available for the Master 128 computer. Some of these support switches and other input devices specially designed for people who cannot use keyboards.

'Our 32-bit machines have enormous potential in this field. However, before Archimedes and the BBC A3000 can be regarded as totally special-needs friendly, we'll need some minor modifications such as serial chips and user ports supplied as standard, mouse emulation and speech output.

'A lot of the special needs software was written for earlier Acorn machines. It's part of my job initially to encourage software houses to modify their programs to run on our RISC products and then to motivate them to write new software with special needs in mind.'

We continue to demonstrate our commitment to the special needs market. One example of our commitment is the recent appointment of Vorn Hancock who takes up the new post of Special Needs Support Co-ordinator. ■

Acorn plays host to Australian students

Sally Wooding

For the past three years, Acorn has welcomed undergraduates from Australia and New Zealand through the BAVE (Britain Australasia Vocational Exchange) scheme.

'The students we've had so far have been absolutely excellent,' says Janet Henson-Webb, 'and I hope we will be getting another to join us in December.

Last year's student, Sally Wooding, worked for nine weeks as a communications assistant in Corporate Communications. She had two major projects. One involved formulating a company proposal which required much research and reading; the second task was to organise and co-ordinate a stand at a trade exhibition in London.

'Generally, I felt that I'd been given a sense of purpose with the company and the chance to make the most of this was both interesting and rewarding! I enjoyed my time immensely and would have no hesitation in recommending the scheme to future students.' ■

New Olivetti Office link man

Over the past few months we have given a number of Acorn presentations to Olivetti's top management and are confident that we have convinced them that they should be using and/or selling Acorn products and technology.

To assist with the process, Flavio Bonardo has now been appointed in the Ivrea product management group as a 'link man' between our two organisations.

Commenting on the appointment, Mike O'Riordan stated: 'I'm very pleased with this development. Flavio knows his way round the Olivetti Organisation and will be able to make sure we're talking to the right people. The appointment of a link man demonstrates Olivetti Office's interest in us, and I'm confident that Flavio will be doing everything in his power to achieve his and our objectives.' ■

Acorn enters German market

September saw the introduction of Acorn's first fully nationalised product into the German market. This is the very successful A3000 computer, and is aimed at the serious home hobby sector. Germany is Europe's biggest and most active PC market, and Acorn's advanced technology appeals to these sophisticated users.

Before entering this market, a careful process of research and qualification was undertaken, and the product development itself was rigidly controlled by Acorn's technical and manufacturing divisions. Germany has strict safety and radiation standards, and the new machine of course satisfies all these. It comes complete with German documentation, and German application disks. In addition a number of software houses have already translated their packages into German for sale alongside the A3000.

Distribution is taking place through three dedicated regional distributors, covering between them the whole country. Their task is now to build a chain of professional dealers, thus providing a solid base for the sale of both current and future Acorn product in Germany. ■

The name that inspired the trip

In July this year Kechil Kirkham left England for the trip of a lifetime in search of her namesake. Before she was born her parents welcomed a Malaysian lady into their home over Christmas. Her name was difficult for her British hosts to pronounce, so they used her nickname, 'Kechil'. And when thinking of a name for their new baby, they decided to call her Kechil too.

With a first degree in anthropology and a burning ambition to travel extensively, Kechil decided to take time off work to visit Bali, Lombok, Java, Malaysia and Thailand. Armed with a 20-year-old address in Kuala Lumpur she set out to find the original Kechil, who, if she was still alive, would be in her late sixties.

Unfortunately the younger Kechil never found her namesake. But that didn't stop her having a wonderful holiday. 'The people are really friendly and love to laugh, especially at foreigners. Naturally the first thing they ask is your name. "Kechil" means "little one" and since I'm about 5ft 10in they had plenty to laugh about!'

Kechil travelled extensively, admiring the beautiful scenery in which swaying palm trees and rice paddies feature strongly. Of all the places she visited, Malaysia impressed her most. 'The culture and food are wonderful – and everything is so cheap!'

Part of the charm of that part of the world is how you travel. Kechil made much use of bemos (ancient minibuses), dokars (beautifully decorated pony-drawn carts) and bechaks (back-to-front tricycles with the passenger sitting up front while the driver pedals furiously at the back).

Highlights of the trip were climbs to the top of volcanoes (you have to start at four in the morning to avoid the searing heat) and the delicious exotic fruits. Kechil's favourite was durian which looks like a green melon, tastes like bread and pears, and smells awful!

If you want to get away from it all, you can't beat a remote island. Or so Kechil thought. Lombok is a very remote island about 60 miles across. Kechil visited an even tinier island off Lombok with no electricity or water. There she met an Irish nurse who hadn't been in England for many years. When Kechil said she came from Cambridge, to her amazement the Irish nurse asked if she knew Lionel Haines. Many of you will remember Lionel who worked at Acorn until quite recently!

Kechil's accommodation was simple but atmospheric. 'It ranged from little beach huts to beautiful places with views over the mountains. The best places had no electricity, just primitive gas lamps and noisy generators. In the forests, I'd sometimes be woken up by monkeys coming into my room at night. But mostly I tried to sleep out on the verandah, where I could watch the stars before falling asleep, and wake in the morning sun.'

New names, new faces

We welcome the following people who have joined Acorn since August 1990

Name	*Job Title*
Roland Westlake	Area Sales Manager
Beverley Stead	Receptionist
Vorn Hancock	Support Co-ordinator – Sales and Marketing
Doug Shulman	Stores Person
Melanie McLeod	Secretary, Education Business Unit
Darron Aldridge	Systems Operator
Tonia Warner	Technical Clerk
Sandra Thomson	Stores and Administrative Assistant
Lynn Burrows	Receptionist
John McMahon	Regional Account Manager

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Company Events

22 December:
Christmas Party – Officers' Mess, Duxford

Education Business Unit

6 November:
Computer Graphics Exhibition

7 November:
Manchester Tertiary Event

8 November:
Academic Advice Roadshow (Gloucester, Bristol, Bath, Exeter and Plymouth)

15 November:
Resource Conference – Teachers Support Scheme

22 November:
Academic Advice Roadshow (Nottingham, Staffordshire, Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester)

25 November:
Acorn Software Roadshow

6 December:
Academic Advice Roadshow (Reading, North East London, Kingston, Brighton and Portsmouth)

VAR Business Unit

7 November:
Open Systems Exhibition

Consumer Business Unit

6-9 December 1990:
Computer Shopper – Wembley Conference and Exhibition Centre

Contributions to 'Comment' via E-mail

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